

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
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S E C R E T SANTIAGO 4564

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PFOR, CI, US
SUBJECT: USG POLICY REGARDING DISAPPEARANCES IN CHILE

REFS: (A) STATE 124513 (B) STATE 123807

1. SUMMARY: WE SUGGEST STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE CHILEAN DISAPPEARANCE PROBLEM BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF PRIVATELY ENCOURAGING GOC OFFICIALS TO STOP THE PRACTICE AND TO UNDERTAKE INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL CHANGES. SUCH CHANGES WOULD MAKE RESORT TO THE PRACTICE MUCH LESS LIKELY AND WOULD ENTAIL SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES ACROSS THE BOARD. END SUMMARY

2. THE DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE NOTCED THAT BOTH CHILEAN AMBASSADOR CAUAS AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER ALMEYDA TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN RAISING THE ISSUE OF MYSTERIOUSLY MISSING PERSONS DURING THEIR RESPECTIVE MEETINGS WITH THE DEPUTY SECRETARY LAST WEEK (REFTELS). CAUAS, WHILE CHARACTERIZING DISAPPEARANCES AS "THE GREATEST HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM CHILE HAS", MANAGED TO IMPLY THAT MOST CASES WERE SPURIOUS AND THAT THE FEW REMAINING ONES COULD, AND SHOULD, BE RESOLVED THROUGH INVESTIGATION. ALMEYDA DESCRIBED IT AS "THE WEAK POINT OF THE JUNTA" AND SUGGESTED THAT BY HARPING ON THIS SORE NERVE THE JUNTA WOULD BE DRIVEN TO LIBERALIZE. BOTH DESCRIPTIONS APPEAR TO US TO BE WIDE OF THE MARK, AND WE SUGGEST A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE US ARGUMENT

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ON DISAPPEARANCES.

3. WITH ONE EXCEPTION, CAUAS DISINGENOUSLY PRESENTS THE STANDARD CHILEAN POSITION ON DISAPPEARANCES: THEY HELD MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, SNEAKED ABROAD OR DIED DURING THE COUP. HE AT LEAST ADMITS THAT SOME REALLY DISAPPEARED, BUT HE DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THE TURE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM FOR CHILE:

-- GRANTED THAT SOME OF THE PEOPLE ON SOME OF THE DISAPPEARED LISTS RESPOND TO CAUAS' DESCRIPTION. NEVERTHELESS, NOT ONE PERSON NAMED ON THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY'S LIST OF 415 DISAPPEARED (SANTIAGO 2655) HAS EVER, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, BEEN LOCATED -- DEAD OR ALIVE. VICARIATE SOURCES TELL US IN ADDITION THAT NO ONE NAMED ON ITS LIST OF 800 (IBID) HAS EVER BEEN FOUND.

-- PEOPLE DISAPPEARED "PERMANENTLY" DURING AT LEAST A 39-MONTH PERIOD, LEADING TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS KIND OF KILLING WAS AUTHORIZED OR ACCEPTED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GOC'S INTERNAL SECURITY POLICIES -- NOT MERELY AN EXCESS OF THE IMMEDIATE COUP PERIOD.

-- IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER ALL THE SERVICES INDULGED IN THE PRACTICE, ALTHOUGH FOR THE LAST YEAR OR SO THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE (DINA) AND TO A LESSER EXTENT AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE ACCOUNTED FOR MOST CASES. THUS, INVOLVEMENT OR COMPLICITY LIKELY EXTENDS THROUGHOUT THE MILITARY.

4. THE PRACTICE IS UNIQUE IN CONTEMPORARY CHILEAN HISTORY; WE CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT THIS GOVERNMENT, OR THE CHILEAN MILITARY ITSELF, WILL EVER RID ITSELF COMPLETELY OF THIS ALBATROSS. THIS APPEARS TO BE ALMEYDA'S JUDGMENT AS WELL.

5. BUT ALMEYDA'S DESCRIPTION FOR IMPROVING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CHILE IS TO OVERTHROW THE JUNTA. THIS COMES THROUGH VERY CLEARLY IN HIS TALK WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER. ACCORDINGLY, ALMEYDA FAVORS THE REPEATED INTERNATIONAL SALTING OF THE WOUND REPRESENTED BY THE DISAPPEARED. HE CLAIMS THIS WOULD START "A LIBERALIZING PROCESS IN CHILE". ALMEYDA KNOWS PERFECTLY WELL THE GOC CANNOT EXPLAIN AWAY THE DISAPPEARED (ITS CLUMSY EFFORTS TO SECRET

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DATE ONLY MAKE THAT CRYSTAL CLEAR). THUS, RATHER THAN FORCE EXPLANATIONS OR INSURE THAT NO FURTHER DISAPPEARANCES OCCUR, ALMEYDA SEEKS TO SO SIGMATIZE THE GOC AND MILITARY THAT THEY ARE OVERTHROWN. IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT, THE MOST LIKELY RESPONSE TO THE ALMEYDA APPROACH IS A DIFFENING OF THE GOC RESOLVE TO STAY IN POWER UNTIL MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, THE PROBLEM FADES AWAY.

6. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE THE USG? FIRST, WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN IGNORE THE DISAPPEARANCE PROBLEM (NOTE THAT CAIAS TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN RAISING IT). SECOND, WE NO LONGER HAVE MUCH HOPE THAT ANY OF THOSE ABDUCTED UP TO MID-DECEMBER REMAIN ALIVE. THIRD, WE THINK THAT THE DISAPPEARED PERSONS ISSUE CAN USEFULLY BE MELDED INTO A POLICY AIMED AT ENDING THE PRACTICE (BY REMINDERS OF HOW COSTLY IT HAS BEEN) AND AT ILLUSTRATING THE PITFALLS OF RELIANCE ON EMERGENCY POWERS AND UNBIQUITOUS SECRET POLICE.

7. WE WILL BE SUGGESTING SEPARATELY SOME ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATIONS ABOUT THE STEPS NEEDED TO RESTORE EFFECTIVE DUE PROCESS THROUGH ABANDONMENT OR MODIFICATION OF EMERGENCY POWERS LEGISLATION,

AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN THE INTELLIGENCE"POLICE FUNCTIONS.
MEANWHILE WE MAKE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

-- THAT WE CONTINUE TO REAIS STRONGLY THE DISAPPEARANCE
ISSUE WITH GOC OFFICIALS, IN THE CONTEXT OF URGING INSTITUTIONAL
AND LEGAL CHANGES, MAKEING RECURRENCE LESS LIKELY;
-- THAT WE KEEP SUCH CONVERSATION PRIVATE, AND CAST OUR
PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THE PRACTICE IN GENERAL, WORLD-WIDE TERMS;
-- THAT IN THESE PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WE NOT LET GOC OFFICIALS
OFF THE HOOK WHEN GIVEN THEIR STANDARDS -- AND UNSATISFACTORY
-- RESPONSES.

8. AS WE SEE IT, THE PURPOSE OF THE US INTERVENTION ON THIS
EXCRUCIATING PROBLEM IS TO STOP THE PRACTICE PERMANENTLY; THERE
WE THINK WE CAN HAVE SOME EFFECT. RETRIBUTION IS NOT OUR MANDATE
AND NO AMOUNT OF PUBLIC CASTIGATION WILL BRING THE "DISAPPEARED"
BACK.

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